

Cranberries

DUXBURY CLIPPER

Thursday, October 13, 1966

BEFORE THE BERRIES FREEZE

Working against time to find enough dry weather to pick most of the 10,000 acres of cranberries in Plymouth County before they freeze or spoil, concerned growers are hoping now for a maximum of Indian summer. A considerable amount of picking remained until recently because the berries were so late in ripening.

More and more, growers who have been bothered by the drought, have been aided by designs for sprinkler systems, dug-out ponds and water control structures provided by the Plymouth Conservation District. But right now, less, not more, water is essential for harvesting operations.

If a freeze threatens, however, the bog operators flood or sprinkle to save the crop and thus lose time needed for picking. Most of the growers have already operated their sprinklers several times this fall as protection against killing frosts.

The bog men remember the largest cranberry crop ever, harvested last year and hope, though the picking time is at least 10 days later than aver-

age, that this year's crop will equal last year's. A series of warm dry days with no frost would be helpful, without any extra rain from hurricane Inez or other storms, till the picking is finished.

The cranberry growers, with the most profitable agricultural enterprise in Massachusetts and New England, are adding to their investment steadily by modernizing methods of supplying water to bogs. Most cranberry bogs are old. The cranberry industry in Massachusetts dates back to 1815. Several of the uneconomical bogs that were not maintained are grown up to weeds or forest or have gone to other uses.

This year alone, the Brockton Office of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service assisting the Plymouth Conservation District has received requests for designs for over 300 sprinkler systems. Many have already been completed. Besides, 132 dug-out ponds, 73 water control structures and 31 dam-type ponds are either finished or being surveyed and designed.

Several cranberry bogs provide excellent examples of these water management improvements for instance, the dug-out ponds and sprinkler systems. Lawrence Pink of North Carver has installed a

low-gallage, low pressure sprinkler system on three bogs in Duxbury, and a dug-out pond was excavated to supply the system. Another dug-out pond has recently been completed by George Crowell at Duxbury. Dozens of other bog owners are handling their water problems in similar ways, designed to increase production and obtain maximum re-use of water before it flows off to the Atlantic Ocean.

Improved water management to increase yields and prevent serious frost damage is the key to bog owners now, and these systems are being put to the test with the late harvest.

In addition to the complete water management systems being planned and designed by District technicians, including new reservoirs, pumping plants, canals, new pipe and others, low-gallage sprinkler systems provide an efficient economical method of protecting the bogs.

Experiments by the Massachusetts Cranberry Experimental Station at Wareham show water applied at 1/10th inch an hour adequately protects cranberries from frost damage. Not only do the sprinkler systems provide uniform coverage at the required precipitation rate, but the grower can also irri-

gate as well as apply chemicals for disease and insect protection through the system.

Requests for assistance may be made to the Plymouth Conservation District, Soil Conservation Service, Room 210, Brockton Post Office Building, Brockton, or by telephoning 583-4500 extension 605.